

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 EB-08 NRC-05 OES-07 SOE-02
DOE-11 CEQ-01 TRSE-00 DOEE-00 /109 W
-----126077 061727Z /45

O R 061348Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2176
INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE
USLOSACLANT
USMNR SHAPE
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 1173

USNMR SHAPE FOR POLAD

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MNUC, NATO, NPG, PGOV, OVIP, NL

REF: A) THE HAGUE 1117 (DTG 021622 MAR 78) (NOTAL), B) THE
HAGUE 674 (DTG 091602 FEB 78) (NOTAL); C) 77 THE HAGUE
6305 (DTG 161535 DEC 77) (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: ROELOF KRUISINGA HAS RESIGNED AS DUTCH DEFENSE
MINISTER. THOUGH GIVING HIS INABILITY TO ACCEPT THE CABINET
POSITION ON ER/RB AS THE GROUND FOR HIS RESIGNATION, THE REAL
REASON HAS TO DO WITH THE RAPIDLY INCREASING DIFFICULTIES
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IN HANDLING HIS JOB AND THE RELATION WITH HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES.
WASHINGTON VISIT CANCELLED. END SUMMARY

2. NETHERLANDS MINISTER OF DEFENSE ROELOF KRUISINGA RE-
SIGNED OVER THE WEEKEND. AS INDICATED REFTELS, HE HAD A
ROCKY START AS DEFENSE MINISTER. THE IMBROGLIO ABOUT SELEC-
TING A STATE SECRETARY FROM THE LIBERAL PARTY AND HIS "PERSONAL"

VIEWS IN OPPOSITION TO ER/RB EARNED HIM THE HOSTILITY OF THE LIBERAL COALITION PARTY AND DID NOTHING TO GIVE CONFIDENCE TO HIS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT COLLEAGUES IN HIS ABILITY TO HANDLE THE POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF HIS TASK AS MOD. UNTIL RECENTLY HE SEEMED RELATIVELY SECURE IN HIS POSITION AS A MEMBER OF THE CABINET, DESPITE HIS OAFISH BEHAVIOR AND MALADROIT MANAGEMENT OF SENSITIVE DEFENSE ISSUES. THIS OPINION, HOWEVER, CHANGED PRECEPTIVELY DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS, DURING WHICH KRUISINGA TOOK PUBLIC ISSUE IN PARLIAMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER KLAUW ON ER/RB (THE HAGUE 984, DTG 241422 FEB 78, NOTAL). HIS SUGGESTIONS IN NORWAY TO BEEF UP DUTCH MARINE CORPS CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFENSE OF THE NORTHERN FLANK CONFIRMED THE GROWING IMPRESSIONS THAT KRUISINGA, EVEN IF WELL INTENTIONED, HAD AN UNCOMMON KNACK FOR BEING OFF-BASE.

3. KRUISINGA HAS GIVEN HIS INABILITY TO GO ALONG WITH THE CABINET POSITION ON THE ER/RB AS THE GROUND FOR HIS RESIGNATION. CERTAINLY, ER/RB HAS CONTRIBUTED TO HIS DIFFICULTIES. THERE WAS GENERAL SURPRISE WHEN KRUISINGA PUBLICLY VOICED HIS "PERSONAL" OPPOSITION TO ER/RB. ON THE PART OF THE COALITION LIBERAL PARTY THERE WAS RESENTMENT WHEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A DIFFICULT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON ER/RB TWO WEEKS AGO KRUISINGA DESERTED BOTH FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER KLAUW AND THE AGREED CABINET POSITION. THOUGH AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DEBATE THE DIFFERENCE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN PATCHED UP (THE HAGUE 1085, DTG 011546 MAR 78, NOTAL),
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IT LEFT THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT IN KRUISINGA THE CABINET WAS STUCK WITH THE PROVERBIAL BULL IN THE CHINA SHOP. SPECULATION GREW THAT KRUISINGA MIGHT NOT LAST THE LIFE OF THE CABINET AND MIGHT HAVE TO BE REPLACED. IN ATTRIBUTING HIS RESIGNATION TO ER/RB, HOWEVER, KRUISINGA HAS NOT MADE LIFE ANY EASIER FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. THE GRASSROOTS OF THAT PARTY ARE PREDOMINANTLY OPPOSED TO ER/RB. THESE FEELINGS ARE STRENGTHENED BY THE POSITION OF INFLUENTIAL CHURCH GROUPS THAT ER/RB IS UNETHICAL, IMMORAL AND DANGEROUS. WITH THE NATIONAL MANIFESTATION AGAINST THE ER/RB ONLY TWO WEEKS AWAY AND A REPORTED 900,000 SIGNATURES (FROM A POPULATION OF 13.5 MILLION) OPPOSING THE WEAPON, KRUISINGA'S STAND HAS THE EFFECT OF FURTHER CORNERING THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT LEADERS.

4. THE REAL REASON FOR KRUISINGA'S RESIGNATION, HOWEVER, SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN HIS GENERAL INABILITY TO GET ON WITH HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES AND IN THE OBVIOUS DIFFICULTIES KRUISINGA HAS EXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH SOME DIFFICULT AND SENSITIVE DEFENSE ISSUES. DURING HIS 75 DAYS IN OFFICE, KRUISINGA GAVE PLENTY OF EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS NOT ON TOP OF HIS JOB. ANXIOUS TO LAY AN EARLY CLAIM ON MORE FUNDS FOR DEFENSE, HE IRRITATED HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES BY PUBLICLY ASKING FOR AN ADDITIONAL

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350-MILLION GUILDERS FOR 1978. WHEN IT WAS MADE CLEAR TO HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT PLAYING THE GAME ACCORDING TO THE RULES, HE LOWERED HIS SIGHTS TO 200-MILLION GUILDERS, EVENTUALLY ABANDONING MENTION OF ANY FIGURES. BOTH IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE AMBASSADOR, KRUISINGA EMPHASIZED OFFSET BUT WAS NEVER ABLE TO IDENTIFY PRECISELY WHAT THE DUTCH MIGHT BE ABLE TO SELL IN NORTH AMERICA. HIS REFERENCE TO A POSSIBLE INCREASED DUTCH MARINE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFENSE OF NORWAY WAS MADE, WE ARE TOLD AUTHORITATIVELY, DESPITE DISTINCT NORWEGIAN COOLNESS AND A SPECIFIC REQUEST THAT KRUISINGA NOT MENTION IT PUBLICLY. THE HASSLE ABOUT SELECTING A LIBERAL STATE SECRETARY AND THE DESERTION FROM THE CABINET POSITION ON ER/RB
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IN THE MIDDLE OF A DIFFICULT PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ADDED TO KRUISINGA'S DISCREDIT.N ON NATO VISITS KRUISINGA ALSO CAUSED TROUBLE. IN ADDITION TO STUMBLING IN NORWAY, KRUISINGA RAISED EYEBROWS IN LONDON WHEN, ON RETURN FROM HIS VISIT TO SEE MULLEY, HE TOLD THE DUTCH PRESS THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE BRITISH CABINET WAS OPPOSED TO ER/RB.

5. ONE INTERPRETATION OF WHAT LED TO KRUISINGA'S DECISION TO RESIGN IS THAT HE ARRIVED AT THE CONCLUSION THAT HE DID NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT POLITICAL SUPPORT FROM HIS COLLEAGUES FOR WHAT HE SOUGHT TO ACCOMPLISH. A LESS CHARITABLE VIEW IS THAT HE BECAME INCREASINGLY DISTURBED ABOUT HIS INABILITY TO MAKE THINGS GO RIGHT. WHATEVER THE REASON, KRUISINGA HAS IN EFFECT TERMINATED HIS POLITICAL CAREER JUST WHEN HE HAD REACHED THE POSITION OF PROMINENCE WHICH HAD BEEN HIS LIFELONG AMBITION. IN THIS SENSE THE KRUISQNGA RESIGNATION IS NOT WITHOUT A TRAGIC PERSONAL ELEMENT.

6. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHO WILL SUCCEED KRUISINGA. IN ACCORDANCE WITH CUSTOM, BOTH STATE SECRETARIES--VAN LENT (CDA) AND VAN EEKELEN (LIBERAL)--HAVE ALSO SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS. THE MOST LOGICAL SOLUTION WOULD BE FOR THE CHU WING OF THE CDA TO PROVIDE A NEW CANDIDATE. MFA STATE SECRETARY VAN DER MEI HAS BEEN MENTIONED IN THIS CONNECTION, ALONG WITH SOME OTHER NAMES. THE TROUBLE IS THAT NONE OF THESE CANDIDATES LOOK ATTRACTIVE. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT ANOTHER CDA MEMBER OF THE CABINET WOULD PICK UP DEFENSE. MINISTER OF SCIENCE PEIJNENBURG IS MENTIONED IN THIS CONNECTION, THE RESULTING VACANCY GOING TO THE CHU. FOR THE INTERIM DEVELOPMENT AID MINISTER DE KONING IS ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER. THE CABINET WILL CONSIDER THIS MATTER FURTHER. THE SUCCESSOR WILL BE ABLE TO PICK HIS STATE SECRETARIES, THOUGH THE PRESUMPTION IS THAT THE INCUMBENTS WOULD REMAIN. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN OUTSIDE

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POSSIBILITY THAT THIS WILL PROVIDE A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR LIBERAL PARLIAMENTARY DEFENSE SPOKESMAN PLOEG, WHOM KRUISINGA DECLARED UNACCEPTABLE. IN THAT CASE, VAN EEKELEN WOULD PRESUMABLY RETURN TO PARLIAMENT.

7. ONE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF KRUISINGA'S RESIGNATION IS THAT HE WILL NOT VISIT WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK. MOD HAS ALREADY TOLD US THAT WORD WAS BEING PASSED THROUGH THE NETHERLANDS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON.

8. COMMENT: KRUISINGA'S DEPARTURE HAS BEEN GREETED WITH A DEEP SIGH OF RELIEF IN THE HAGUE BY GOVERNMENT PARTIES AND OPPOSITION ALIKE. THE COALITION IS NOW NO LONGER BURDENED BY A DIVISIVE AND POTENTIALLY DEBILITATING ELEMENT JUST PRIOR

TO THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 29. KRUISINGA'S RESIGNATION WILL, HOWEVER, COMPOUND THE COALITION'S DIFFICULTIES ON ER/RB. THE SOCIALIST CHAIRMAN OF THE PARLIAMENT'S DEFENSE COMMITTEE, DE VRIES, COMMENTED TO POL COUNS THAT KRUISINGA WAS THE FIRST DUTCH CASUALTY OF THE NEUTRON BOMB, PREDICTING THERE WOULD BE MORE. KRUISINGA'S DEPARTURE WILL, IF ANYTHING, MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DO ANYTHING BUT PLEAD AGAINST ITS DEPLOYMENT IN EUROPE. MCCLOSKEY

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